

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /070 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0021

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

FAA BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US

SUBJ: CIVAIR: PRESS INVITES WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN IN
SUPPORT OF CONCORDE

1. WIRE SERVICES REPORT THAT THE FRENCH NEWSPAPERS
SUD-OUEST OF BORDEAUX AND LA DEPECHE DU MIDI OF
TOULOUSE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE BRISTOL EVENING
POST, HAVE JUST LAUNCHED CAMPAIGN URGING
THEIR READERSHIP TO PARTICIPATE IN WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN
AIMED AT INFLUENCING NEW YORK'S DECISION ON
CONCORDE. READERS ARE ASKED TO SIGN AND SEND IN FOR
FORWARDING TO NEW YORK A PRINTED FORM BEARING THE
INSCRIPTION IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH "LET IT LAND--
LAISSEZ-LE ATTERIR." AFP REPORTS THAT CAMPAIGN
WAS KICKED OFF FEB. 23 IN TOULOUSE BY COMMITTEE
FOR DEFENSE OF CONCORDE AT PRESS CONFERENCE ALSO
ATTENDED BY ANDRE TURCAT, FORMER CHIEF TEST
PILOT FOR CONCORDE AT AEROSPATIALE AND NOW ONE OF
FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S ADVISERS. (DEPT.
WILL RECALL CHIRAC AND TURCAT HELD PRESS CONFERENCE
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ON CONCORDE LAST WEEK AS REPORTED PARIS 4905.)
COMMITTEE ASKED THAT CAMPAIGN BE CONCLUDED BY
MARCH 5 IN ORDER DEMONSTRATE TO NEW YORK AUTHORITIES
FORCE OF GROUND-SWELL OF OPINION IN FRANCE
AND UK IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE. (WE UNDERSTAND
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX IS REPORTING SEPARATELY ON
LAUNCHING OF THIS PRO-CONCORDE CAMPAIGN.)

2. APROPOS OF THE FOREGOING WE RECEIVED VISIT FEB. 15 FROM GEORGES RAS OF THE NEWSPAPER SUD-OUEST. HE WAS REFERRED TO US BY PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN FRANCE, WHO HAD SHORTLY BEFORE SENT MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF CHAMBER TO GOV. CAREY IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE. (GOV. CAREY SENT BACK A TERSE REPLY THAT HE REMAINED FIRMLY OPPOSED TO CONCORDE LANDING AT NEW YORK.) RAS EXPLAINED THAT FEELINGS WERE STILL RUNNING HIGH IN THE BORDEAUX-TOULOUSE AREA ON THE CONCORDE ISSUE AND THERE WAS MUCH LOOSE AND DANGEROUS TALK OF POSSIBLE ACTION SUCH AS BOYCOTT OF AMERICAN GOODS AND SERVICES. HE FELT THAT SUD-OUEST SHOULD SEEK TO CHANNEL THIS POPULAR EMOTION TO MORE CONSTRUCTIVE ENDS AND LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN (OR USE OF PRE-PRINTED FORMS) TO INFLUENCE NEW YORK DECISION WAS ONE POSSIBILITY HE HAD IN MIND. HE ASKED FOR OUR SUGGESTIONS.

3. WE TOLD HIM EMBASSY WAS CERTAINLY NOT IN POSITION TO COUNSEL HIM OR OTHER FRENCH INTERESTS ON MEANS OF BRINGING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON US AUTHORITIES OR WHERE ANY SUCH PRESSURE SHOULD BE DIRECTED. THIS BEING SAID, WE COULD MAKE A FEW GENERAL OBSERVATIONS. WRITE-IN CAMPAIGNS IN SUPPORT OF DRAFT LEGISLATION OR IN REACTION TO IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS A MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH WERE COMMON PRACTICE IN THE US, THOUGH NOT IN FRANCE. IN A SENSE THEY WERE A KIND OF "STRAW POLL" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INDICATING WHICH WAY A PERCENTAGE OF THE CONSTITUENCY THAT HAD THUS MANIFESTED ITSELF WAS LEANING. THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH WRITE-IN CAMPAIGNS ON THE FUNCTIONING OF OUR INSTITUTIONS SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED. ALSO THE VOLUME OF LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS COULD BE RELATIVELY LARGE. SUD-OUEST WOULD THEREFORE BE WELL ADVISED TO HAVE IN MIND THAT FRENCH CITIZENS WERE NOT THE CONSTITUENTS OF ELECTED OR APPOINTED AUTHORITIES OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK; ALL THE LETTERS FROM FRANCE WOULD BE EXPECTED TO BE PRO-CONCORDE ANYWAY, ESPECIALLY IF A PRE-PRINTED FORM WAS USED, WHICH WOULD DIMINISH THE IMPACT; AND THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT THE CAMPAIGN MIGHT PRODUCE A VOLUME OF LETTERS OR FORMS THAT NEW YORK AUTHORITIES WOULD CONSIDER INSIGNIFICANT AND PERHAPS SUGGESTIVE THAT POPULAR SENTIMENT IN FRANCE IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE WASN'T SO STRONG AFTER ALL. IF A NATION OF FIFTY MILLION FRENCHMEN PRODUCED ONLY A FEW THOUSAND LETTERS OR FORMS IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE, THEN THE WHOLE

OPERATION COULD EASILY BACKFIRE.

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4. RAS, WHO SAID THAT HE HAD SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN THE US, AGREED THAT THESE POINTS WERE WELL TAKEN. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT SUD-OUEST STILL FELT THAT SOME KIND OF GESTURE ON ITS PART FOR MOBILIZING PUBLIC OPINION WAS NECESSARY. WE PROFITED FROM THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO REVIEW THE CONCORDE ISSUE WITH HIM IN SOME DETAIL, SEEKING TO CORRECT SOME OF THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHICH PERSISTED IN THE FRENCH MIND.

5. COMMENT: THE WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN THAT HAS NOW BEEN LAUNCHED REFLECTS THE FRUSTRATIONS OF CONCORDE SUPPORTERS AMONG FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION. IN THE FACE OF A SITUATION AT NEW YORK THAT THEY DEPLORE, THAT THEY CANNOT FULLY COMPREHEND, AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN POWERLESS THUS FAR TO INFLUENCE IN ANY DECISIVE FASHION, THEY MUST DO SOMETHING. DOING ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN DOING NOTHING. WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS THAT THE WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN, EVEN IF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOLUME OF RESPONSES IS REALLY OVERWHELMING, IS
GOING TO INFLUENCE ANYONE IN NEW YORK.
THERE IS, HOWEVER, THE DANGER THAT IF THE NEW YORK
DECISION IS NEGATIVE NEXT MONTH AFTER SUD-OUEST AND
THE OTHER NEWSPAPERS HAVE HELPED THE POPULACE TO
GET A GOOD HEAD OF STEAM UP OVER CONCORDE, THEN
THE COUNTER-REACTION IN FRANCE COULD BE JUST THAT
MUCH WORSE. HELL HAS NO FURY LIKE A WOMAN SCORNE
D.
RUSH

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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